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COMMITTEE FOR TRADE, INDUSTRY AND
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**CROSS-SECTORAL ACTIVITIES IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT,
GENDER MAINSTREAMING AND INFORMATION AND
COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES FOR DEVELOPMENT**

Note by the secretariat

The following document is **for information only**. It describes the cross-sectoral work being undertaken within the work programme of the Committee and is divided into two sections covering the two main work areas under the Committee: Trade Development, and Industrial Restructuring and Enterprise Development.

I. TRADE DEVELOPMENT

1. Sustainable development

1. Whenever possible, the Trade Development programme takes into account sustainable development and sustainable trade in concrete projects as well as in the formulation of trade policies, standardization and certification. For example, in a cross-sectoral activity on certification, conformity assessment and environmental standards, the Working Party on Technical Harmonization and Standardization Policies (WP.6), together with the Timber Committee, is considering work on forest certification matters to foster sustainable development and promote international trade in this environmentally sensitive area.

2. Projects on the development of trade capacity in the Russian timber sector and the promotion of sustainable trade in biomass continued during the last year and will be expanded and further implemented during the coming year. These projects are funded by extrabudgetary resources and focus on the sustainable development of the Russian forest industry. They have included seminars, forums, working meetings and sessions held in the Russian Federation as well as in the Netherlands and focused on wide-ranging topics. More specifically, during the last year they included a seminar (which also resulted in a publication) on “Sustainable Development and Biofuel Use in the Russian Forest Industry”; a conference on sustainable development strategies at the regional level; a forum on the sustainable development of the forest sector in Northwest Russia; a congress on biomass in Leningrad oblast; and several working sessions on biomass logistics in the Netherlands as well as in several timber ports in Leningrad oblast. Another working session on sustainable development was also held in Arkhangelsk.

3. Standardization of commercial quality requirements for perishable produce, as undertaken by the Working Party on Standardization of Perishable Produce and Quality Development (WP.7), is a vital step towards increased market access for produce from all areas of the world. Fair, open and international standards will help guarantee the quality of the produce and facilitate international trade and integration into international supply chains in the food business. Primary agricultural produce already constitutes an important share of international trade. However, the share of developing and transition economies in these trade flows needs to be increased. The UNECE standards and their spread into other areas of the world are, in this respect, vital to ensure market access, competition and the long-term, sustainable survival of producers from transition economies on world markets. The Trade Development programme has actively pursued ways to promote these standards within the region and to cooperate with other regional commissions in this area to ensure the access of all countries to this important component of sustainable trade development.

2. Gender mainstreaming

4. During the coming year, UNECE hopes to build the capacity of women farmers in certain member countries to implement quality standards for agricultural produce. The understanding and use of these standards are prerequisites for their more active participation in the agro-business sector and international trade.

5. Within the framework of UN/CEFACT, during the coming year we hope to be able to examine how to encourage women’s access to and use of ICT in order to open up new business opportunities to women in transition economies and developing countries.

3. Information and Communication Technologies for development

6. The UNECE has set up an Information and Communication Technologies (ITC) Task Force with the participation of focal points from each Division. This Task Force is led by the Director of the Trade Division. The Trade Division is also responsible within the UNECE for the United Nations ICT Task Force and related input to the 2003 World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). The secretariat of the Trade Development programme is actively involved in the preparatory work for the Summit and is in constant liaison with other involved organizations. Thus, on 29 April 2002, a European Regional Expert Meeting on the UN ICT Task Force Regional Network and the World Summit on Information Society was held in Geneva. The aim of this meeting was to set up a European regional

network to support the UN ICT for development and transition process. The Trade Division will also coordinate the UNECE support for the Executive Secretariat of WSIS and the Government of Romania for the European Regional Preparatory Conference on the WSIS, which is scheduled to take place in Bucharest in November 2002.

7. In the area of E-business standards, the Trade Development programme has several important projects, one of these being UN/EDIFACT (United Nations Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport), a recognized international standard for electronic data interchange between business partners and/or administrations. UN/EDIFACT increases the efficiency of the supply chains, encourages the adoption of international trade standards and implements electronic business. Work is also under way to extend the standard for integration into Internet and XML technologies (e-business eXtended Markup Language - ebXML). UN/EDIFACT is an important technology with many existing electronic business implementations and is one of the dominant international standards for electronic business (used by close to 400,000 enterprises). The Trade Development programme also supports the development of standards for the electronic data interchange of agricultural trade standards information.

8. In addition, a large number of codes used in electronic business are developed and maintained under the Trade Development programme.

9. As part of its ICT work, the Trade Development programme maintains the UNeTradeS.Net (United Nations Standards for Trade and Electronic Business), a web portal currently hosted by UNECE and supported by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA). This portal promotes trade facilitation standards, projects and meetings for the trade community and for political decision makers. The site addresses directly the needs of the business community by providing a one-stop shop for information about trade facilitation activities and standards. For example, UNeTradeS.Net provides electronic versions of important codes used in trade such as country, currency and location codes. It is the main site for the distribution of the data repositories for electronic business developed under UN/EDIFACT, the United Nations Trade Data Element Directory (UNTDDED) and, in the future also repositories built upon XML standards.

10. Trade standards and rules, such as those developed by UN/CEFACT, are a prerequisite for the automation of supply chain processes and for electronic business.

11. Furthermore, the Trade Development programme has also been able to launch a project for promoting trade facilitation in the Mediterranean region in cooperation with ESCWA and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). This project is funded by the United Nations development account. Substantive work on this important project is scheduled to begin this year and will aim at increasing the competitiveness of companies in the Mediterranean region by simplifying and harmonizing trade procedures throughout the transaction chain. Special attention will be given to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their participation in electronic business. Within the framework of this project it is also envisaged to develop e-learning tools for trade facilitation that will be based on UN/CEFACT Recommendation 18 entitled, "Facilitation measures related to international trade procedures".

12. Work on the United Nations Electronic Trade Documents (UNeDocs) project is on-going. The project aims to define a concept for electronic trade documents and to develop a free of charge electronic trade document system. UNeDocs will promote international trade standards, increase the efficiency of international trade, reduce transaction costs and time and open new ways to combat fraud and crime. The standard will be based on aligned paper documents (UN Recommendation 1), UN/EDIFACT and XML and Internet technologies. The project does not attempt to replace paper documents, but rather to complement them with an electronic equivalent, to begin with for set of 12 international trade document forms. By selecting open standards and appropriate technologies, the proposed solution will be accessible to SMEs, developing countries and economies in transition and open a low cost entry path into the electronic business environment as it takes advantage of existing ICT infrastructure and standards. It will support traders from these countries and help them participate in advanced international markets. The project has received funds and contributions in-kind from the Governments of Switzerland and the United Kingdom. The project proposal for a pilot implementation of UNeDocs is still seeking funds.

13. The Trade Development programme has set up multiplier points for trade, industry and enterprise development. These constitute an interactive network of organizations from the public and private sector and NGOs and disseminate UNECE work regarding trade, investment promotion and enterprise development in order to develop these sectors in their countries. The multiplier points communicate with one another and the UNECE secretariat primarily via e-mail, which will soon be supplemented by a web portal. The Internet is thus facilitating bi-directional communications between user groups and between these user groups and the UNECE.

14. In addition, the Trade Division also regularly updates an inventory of ITC- relevant projects and activities within the UNECE.

II. INDUSTRIAL RESTRUCTURING AND ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

1. Sustainable development

15. The programme on Industrial Restructuring and Enterprise Development supports sustainable development by encouraging the creation of employment in transition countries - either directly or indirectly. Thus, the creation of employment needs to be accompanied by reasonable social and environmental protection and an institutional environment conducive to sustainable industrial and entrepreneurial development. Thus, the most important objective of the Real Estate Advisory Group (REAG), which operates under the auspices of the Working Party on Legal and Commercial Practice (WP.5), is to make property rights work for the economy by highlighting the need to formalize the economy and strengthening the capacity of institutions to use legal rights and interests in real property as financing tools. As many of the groups outside the formal economy are low-income groups, REAG has targeted them so as to alleviate poverty and encourage the establishment of sustainable economic development. Critical objectives in this area are: enforceable mortgage regimes; improving mortgage capacity financing and the development of valuation standards in cooperation with international chartered surveyor organizations. REAG benefits from both financial support and support in-kind from the private sector. In September 2001, at the REAG meeting in Geneva, renowned Peruvian Economist Hernando de Soto held a keynote lecture and it was at this event that the "Land for Development Programme" was declared. In September 2002, the Land for Development Summit will be held in Rome, to discuss and define the follow-up to this new programme. Furthermore, two seminars on social housing and developing viable real estate markets have already been held at the annual Central European Initiative (CEI) economic summit in Trieste,

Italy.

16. Further activities in support of sustainable development are carried out under the auspices of the Working Party on Industry and Enterprise Development (WP.8), more specifically by its newly established Team of Specialists on Chemiseed, which covers all aspects of security, safety and sustainable development in the chemical sector, including the problems of polluted sites and their cleanup. Their first meeting took place in October 2001. At the first session, the Team of Specialists examined the activities of the Task Force on the Pilot Project demonstrating the environmental clean-up of selected sites polluted by chemicals. The progress of this project is handicapped by a lack of funds but alternative sources are currently being investigated.

17. Other activities in this area included the publishing of a background paper, prepared for the Third Seminar on Soil Decontamination and a Seminar on Analysis, Methodology of Treatment and Remediation of Contaminated Soils and Groundwater (Paris, 600 participants). A fourth seminar in this series will be held in 2003.

2. Gender mainstreaming

18. In 2001, new activities related to gender and economy have been launched under the Programme on Industrial Restructuring and Enterprise Development. They focus on advice and training on mainstreaming gender into economic policies, new business start-ups and ICT. Thus, UNECE co-organized with the World Bank and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) a regional Workshop on Gender and Labour Market. Training on gender and international financial institutions was also provided at a regional workshop, which was jointly coordinated with the Network of East-West Women in Krakow (Poland) on 10-14 July 2001. A Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the UNECE and UNIFEM was signed at the end of February 2001. At the Regional Conference on the Digital Economy in South East Europe, held in Bucharest on 4-5 October 2001, discussions took place on organizing a session on the E-economy and Women-Entrepreneurs at the next regional conference envisaged for Poland in the autumn of 2002. During 2002-2003 joint projects are also envisaged with the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and UNIFEM on women's entrepreneurship and the mainstreaming women into the economy.

19. Considering the growing importance of women's entrepreneurial activities in job creation and, thus, in the alleviation of the negative social effects of transition reforms, the creation of a regional Forum of Women Entrepreneurs to mobilize support from the public and private sectors for women's entrepreneurship has been initiated in order to improve the access of women's businesses to finance, information, technology and markets. Activities in this area are managed primarily by the Working Party on Industry and Enterprise development (WP.8). The first UNECE Forum of Women Entrepreneurs took place in Geneva on 22 October 2001; sub-regional workshops on the same topic will be held in Sibenik, Croatia (June 2001), Moscow (June 2001) and Trieste, Italy (November 2001). In 2001, the Project on "Creation of a web-site Portrait Gallery of Excellent Women Entrepreneurship in Emerging Market Economic and Countries in Transition" was launched.

20. WP.8 has also established a Team of Specialists on Women and Entrepreneurship. The Team of Specialists will assist member States in promoting women's entrepreneurship through: (a) assessing the situation of women-entrepreneurs in individual countries; (b) discussing national policies and identifying best practices; and (c) establishing guidelines and policy recommendations. The work of the Team of Specialists contributes to strengthening the ongoing UNECE activities in the area of women's entrepreneurship. Currently, the activities supporting women's entrepreneurship have been initiated and carried out by the Coordinating Unit for Operational Activities, especially the Regional Adviser on SMEs and Entrepreneurship and the Regional Adviser on Gender and Economy. The first meeting of the Team of Specialists was held on 12 and 15 February 2002. The Team discussed its programme of work in the framework of follow-up activities to the First UNECE Forum of Women-Entrepreneurs. At this meeting, the background paper on: "The way ahead: proposals for promotion of women entrepreneurship in countries in transition" was presented.

3. Information and Communication Technologies for Development

21. Work on the e-economy under WP.8 is led by the Team of Specialists on Internet Enterprise Development. It examines issues and makes recommendations in the areas of: e-business development and management; e-government; e-commerce; e-payment; e-work (telework); e-procurement and e-learning. Through the UNECE e-Transition Programme, the Team of Specialists assists economies in transition in using these technologies and in their integration into the emerging knowledge-based global economy.

22. The Team of Specialists adopts the principles of the Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/62 of 25 July 1997 on science on technology for development, in which the Council recognizes the enormous social and economic potential of information and communication technologies. It also adopts the recommendations of the United Nations Task Force on ICT, which gives the highest priority to the employment of ICT for enterprise and entrepreneurship development in transition economies. During the year 2001 – 2002, a large number of workshops, seminars and conferences were organized both in Geneva and in transition economies focusing on e-payment, digital economy development, e-work development and e-regulatory framework development.

23. The Team of Specialists cooperates with the UN ICT Task Force Focal Point in the Trade Division for the organization of the regional preparatory meeting in Romania for the UN World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). It is expected that a network of advisory councils on e-strategy development will be developed across the region as a vehicle for support to the WSIS. Based on the mandate of the Team, publications will be developed on relevant topics and practical and policy-oriented guidelines will be developed as inputs to the regional preparatory meeting, together with Internet economy country reports on complex e-policy issues, industry and market structure, and regulatory regimes that are relevant to ICT for development.

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